Central American NEWSLETTER

Newsletter of the Central American Group of the Spanish Main Society.
Editor: Michael P. Birks, 36 Trevor Road, Flixton, Manchester M41 5QH. England. 0161-747 5924.

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CONTENTS

COLLECTING DEAD LETTERS OF THE MEXICAN REVOLUTION (Part 2)

by RICHARD H SAUNDRY 110

HONDURAS: A THIRD REGISTERED COVER?

by J A van RIJN 114

THE SAN JUAN ROUTE FOR MAIL FROM CENTRAL AMERICA

by GIANA WAYMAN 116

NICARAGUA: POSTAL RATES FROM 1913 (Part 5)

by MICHAEL P BIRKS FRPSL 118

The **Central American Group** is a part of the **Spanish Main Philatelic Society,** the leading Society in the world for collectors of Latin America. The journal of the SMPS is *The Mainsheet*, published quarterly, and is free with your subscription. The Secretary is Brian Moorhouse, PO Box 105, PETERBOROUGH PE3 8TQ, England. Phone 01733 2687078. The subscription is currently £8 in Europe or $20 elsewhere. Cheques in sterling of US$ should be made payable to "The Spanish Main". A three year subscription of £21/$54 and a five year subscription of £30/$80 are available and payment for these longer subscriptions may be made by Access, Mastercard or Visa. The minimum subscription is one year. If joining during the course of the year the appropriate part subscriptions should be added - Feb-Apr £6/$15; May-Aug £4/$10; Sep-Nov £2/$5 to pay through to the following January when the subscription paid will come into effect.

The **Central American Group** caters for the collectors of Mexico to Panama. Its journal, which you are now reading, is published quarterly, and is available by annual subscription. The subscription is currently £8/$15 resident in the UK or in Europe, or £11/$19 elsewhere. The minimum subscription is one year. If joining after June 1st, add 50% to pay through to the following January when the subscription paid will come into effect. Cheques in sterling payable to "The CA Group" should be sent to the treasurer, David Hankey, 2 Prince's Drive, Marple, STOCKPORT SK6 6NJ, England. Phone 0161-449 0693. We shall be pleased to forward the relevant portions of multi-subscription cheques to the SMPS or the Chile Group.

We regret we cannot accept dollar cheques for subscriptions because each cheque costs £5/$8 to negotiate.

Back issues are available to members at 75p/$1.50 each, although Volumes 1 *(of which there are only two sets of copies remaining)* and 2 can be purchased for £10/$20 each, complete, inclusive of postage. Non-members may request a sample copy for 75p/$1.50 post paid. Requests for back issues should be sent the the Editor, to whom cheques should be made payable. Undated dollar cheques are acceptable for this service.

The group leader is Richard Saundry, Gwrych Cottage, Gladstone Road, Bletchingley, REDHILL RH1 4PL, Surrey, England. Phone 01883 742186.

The group does not run a packet. The SMPS Packet Secretary is Brian Sylvester, 3 Russell Court, St Lukes Road, MAIDENHEAD SL6 7AP Berkshire, England. Phone 01628 784555.

Although most packets are of a general nature, there are occasional specialised one country packets. Good and unusual material is always wanted.

Owing to insurance difficulties, the packet is not available to overseas members, although we shall be pleased to accept material for inclusion from them.

The auctioneer of the SMPS is Brian Moorhouse, to whom Auction and Private Treaty lots should be sent. Brian is a dealer, and will include your name on his mailing list if requested to do so.

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Vol.IV, No.~~69~~ 70 **~~October 1997~~ Jan 1998**

EDITORIAL

Some time ago Cécile Gruson, Editor of Quetzal, negotiated a reciprocal arrangement with those philatelic groups who publish journals on Latin American subjects that articles could be reprinted without prior permission providing the appropriate acknowledgement was given. Several of the articles which have appeared in our journal have been considered of sufficient quality to have been reprinted elsewhere, one of which was by your Editor who felt quite pleased inwardly.

Myself, I have avoided such reprinting purely on the basis of time - selecting such articles outside one's own sphere of interest is not an easy task. However it has been necessary in this issue, for the very first time, to do this since I had insufficient copy to fill this issue. On the positive side it means a mention for El Salvador which has been sadly neglected but on the negative side it is symptomatic of a deeper problem, that of fewer and fewer writers.

No-one expects research articles to fill every issue of every journal and indeed it would be a dull journal that did this, but I cannot believe that out there reading this journal is a group of philatelists who know everything they would like to know about their collections. Some of the finest philatelic minds in the world read these pages and can be coerced into replying to questions published herein. Questions can also point the way to future articles which can be commissioned, updated and re-run from previous issues or reprinted from other journals. Either way we all benefit and the journal continues.

I don't always get to know of the success of every member in the competitive field and I do hope you will not allow natural reticence to prevent you from informing me of awards from Federation to International level. I have recently come across several awards to our members and would like to share them with you.

At Pacific 97	Dr **Derek Pocock**	Large Vermeil	Nicaragua: Postal Stationery
	Alain Millet	Large Vermeil	PH New Caledonia
	David Aggersberg	Large Vermeil	GB Specialised Catalogue Part 4
At Moscow 97	**Michael Birks**	Large Vermeil	Nicaragua: The Asenjo Contract
	Piet Steen	Bronze	LA Post (Editor)

Our Congratulations to them all (and let's hear about any others, especially if I have accidentally left them out).

On a personal note, although my certificate was correct, the results booklet described me as having exhibited "Waterlow Issues" which I have not shown since 1990! Strange.

mpb

For the diary:- **Saturday 22 November 1997**
Spanish Main Meeting at the Victory Services Club, 10.30 a.m.,

COLLECTING DEAD LETTERS OF THE MEXICAN REVOLUTION (Part 2)

by RICHARD SAUNDRY

Now let us consider a more complicated scenario using another dead letter in my collection, this time where the contents of the envelope afforded re-direction from the Dead Letter Office back to where the sender might have been able to reclaim it. This time I choose a Constitutionalist letter (Fig. 2) franked with 2 ctvo and 3 ctvo Denver issue stamps (SO CT40, CT41) sent from Linares in the State of Nuevo Leon in 1914 (date not clear) to (?)an accommodation address (c/o another individual) in the State of Queretaro. Early in its travels the letter was amended to read Leon, in the State of Guanajuato, and despatched there travelling via QUERETARO, where the letter was struck with black duplex postmark for 9 November 1914 8 a.m., and SILAO where it also received a datestamp 9 November 1914, 8 p.m..

Eventually the letter arrived in LEON, GTO. 11 Nov 1914, 6 p.m.. The address being obscure the letter was given over to a number of delivery postmen to see if they recognised the address. In each case each delivery postman struck the back of the envelope with his personal handstamp reading **"CARTERO NUM./ (number) I LEON, GTO"** with his allotted number in the centre. Five delivery men were consecutively consulted who had personal postmarks with numbers 1, 3, 7, 8 and 9. By the 20th. November all attempts to deliver the letter having proved futile, the letter was entered into the *Lista* in Leon post office (postmarked **"LISTA / 20 NOV 1914 / GTO"**) and advertised with a number in that list (what it was in this case we cannot be absolutely certain as there is a number **"20"** in a circle in red crayon, a number **"22"** in blue crayon, and a "typed" number **"23"** in black, all on the front.

Upon expiry of the proscribed period in the *Lista,* and the letter being unclaimed, it was again struck with a Leon *Lista* postmark, this time exactly two calendar months later on **20 JAN 1915,** and re-directed to the Dead Letter Office in Mexico City. There is also an extremely faintly struck **"No Reclamado"** postmark on the front of the envelope and as the colour of the ink (faint purple) matches exactly that used for striking the two Leon *Lista* postmarks, we can be confident this "anonymous" explanatory mark was also applied in Leon. There are no instructions on the cover indicating "Rezagos" service was required but it evidently next arrived in the Dead Letter Office in Mexico City where the envelope was opened and the contents examined for useful redirectory information. At the Dead Letter Office the cover was **redirected using the expected red ink** back to the putative sender, Catarina Gonzalez in Linares from whence it was originally sent. The letter was resealed using a buff perforated sticky label printed **"Servicio Postal Mexicano / DEPARTEMENTO de REZAGOS"** and a purple oval postmark struck over it reading **"Direccion General de Correos / MEXICO / JUL 14 1915/ SECCION de ESTAFETA".** The words "Seccion de Estafeta" roughly translates as "General Office".

Figure 2. November 1914. Linares, Nuevo Leon to Queretaro.

Where the cover had been between 20 January in Leon and 14 July in Mexico we can only speculate. At this time Mexico City changed hands several times and although it had been relieved by the Costitutionalist forces led by General Obregon on 28 January, it was reoccupied by the Zapatistas on 11 March, and it was only finally retaken by the Constitutionalists under Carranza on 10 July. In the case of this letter it was only after the July re-occupation that the letter could be forwarded from Leon to Mexico City. Earlier in the year (1915) Leon would have still been on the Conventionist side of the line between the opposing forces.

There are two transit datestamps, both for Monterrey in Nuevo Leon (12 a.m. 18 October, and 8 a.m. 21 October). Again the reason for two Monterrey datestamps is puzzling, but Monterrey was an important railway town and consequently the focus of much fighting, and in the ensuing confusion as the territory around the town was liberated from the Conventionists it is not too surprising that mails could be held up.

From Monterrey the letter was forwarded to Linares (postmarked **LINARES, N.L. 21 OCT 1915)** and immediately placed into the *Lista* of that town, being struck with a distinctive **"LISTA / 22 NOV 1915 / LINARES, N.L."** postmark. Senora Gonzalez, not expecting a letter at the Linares post office was not looking out for one, or else she had also moved on, and at the expiry of the time permitted for the letter in the *Lista* in Linares it remained unclaimed. The letter was struck a second time with the *Lista* postmark for Linares, this time dated 22 November 1915.

You will note the time allowed for the letter in this second *Lista* was only a single calendar month, compared with the two calendar months it had remained in the first *Lista* in Leon. I have examined twenty dead letters that were returned by the Dead Letter Office to the original sender's post office, and for each of them the time allowed in the second *Lista* seems consistently to have been only a single calendar month. Generally it seems to me that the periods letters were allowed to stay in the *Listas* of the addressees were two calendar months but only a single calendar month in *Listas* of offices to where letters were redirected from the Dead Letter Office for possible attention by the original sender.

An exception to this "rule" was the single calendar month allowed in any of the post offices in Mexico City, even when this was the original addressee's local post office. Of course as with any rules you will find exceptions and I would welcome comments from others if my "rule of thumb" regarding times allowed in *Listas* seems not to be true.

For example the cover that Dale Pulver chose to illustrate on page 98 of his excellent monograph "Introduction to the Stamps of Mexico" (Linn's Handbook Series, 1992, ISBN 0-940-403-48-X) when describing the fascination of collecting postal history of the Mexican Civil War period, seems only to have stayed in the *Lista* at Queretaro for a six week period.

It is clear that not in all cases was the monthly calendar period strictly enforced.

Returning to the letter whose travels we have been considering presumably it was then sent back to the Dead Letter Office in Mexico a second time. Here the "Rezago" seal had to be broken in order to extract the contents of the envelope for scrutiny of the contents a second time for other clues where the letter could usefully be redirected. The chance that a revolutionary dead letter cover could ever have survived with its "Rezago" seal intact is practically zero: the seals had ordinarily to be broken on return to the Dead Letter Office to gain access to the contents. In our case almost certainly no additional useful information could be had, the contents of the envelope would have been destroyed, and ultimately the envelope found its way from the Dead Letter Office out onto the philatelic market.

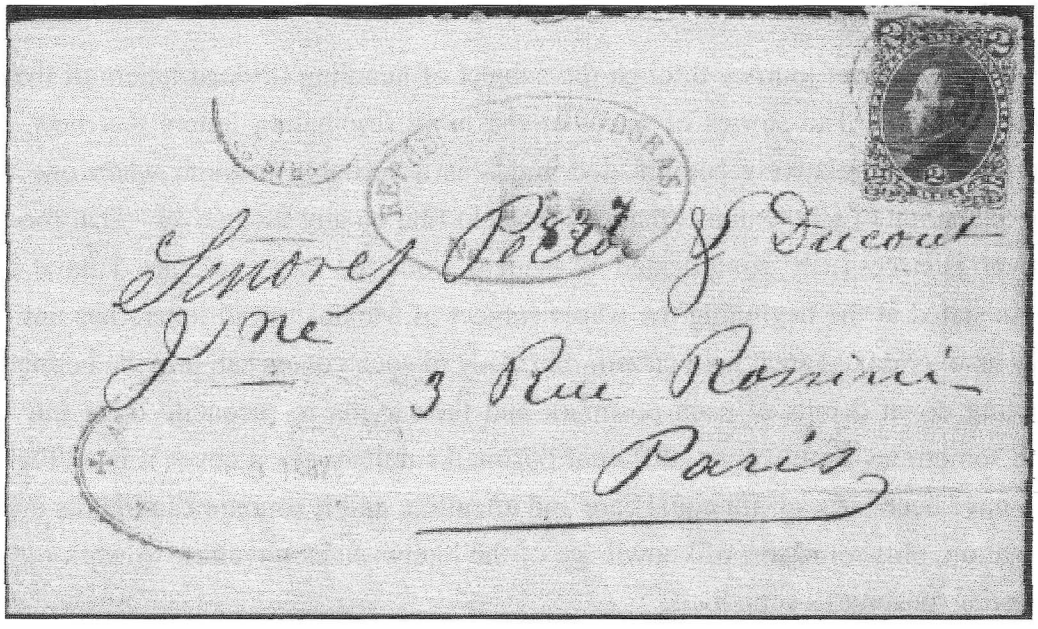
This has been only a brief journey through the subject of handling of dead letters of the Mexican Revolutionary Period. The stories of many of the more fascinating letters that now grace our collections tend to be relatively complicated and it is a veritable triumph when one reaches a plausable explanation of all the marks that one tends to find on any such cover. That the treatment of each cover is necessarily complicated is evident from the two examples I have chosen to describe. As stated at the beginning the whole subject of Mexican dead letters has until recently been largely an overlooked area, but I submit, the study of such covers can provide hours of fruitful pleasure noting down details of each postmark and then trying to reconcile them into a logical story. With sometimes about twenty different postmarks on any given cover it is unlikely all will be found to have been struck with equal care and attention, and it sometimes requires more than a little imagination, plus some sort of knowledge of the likely routes travelled, to work out what the wording on some postmarks actually is.

You will encounter different types of Rezago seals, most commonly the perforated ornate seals as on the letter Pulver chose to illustrate. I have examples of a large label reading "REVISADA / POR EL CENSOR" used on several covers from Puebla in mid-February 1915, so here is another dimension that remains to be explored. This latter type of seal suggests that in certain areas censor offices were operating. Does anyone have any details of the censors' activities in Puebla, or anywhere else in Mexico? Did mails cross from one side to the other having passed censorship ? Incidentally, it is said that the Dead Letter Office in Mexico City has operated continuously since it was founded. If my observations are anything to be going on with it would seem that the Dead Letter Office in Mexico City only operated when the Constitutionalists were in occupation. However, the vast majority of letters I have had access to emanated from the Constitutionalist side, and as these would normally only reach Mexico City whilst the Constitutionalists were calling the shots my samples could well be statistically skewed. So, if any reader has a dead letter from the Mexican Civil War period it would warrant close examination, and most importantly I would be fascinated to hear of any that transited the Dead Letter Office whilst the Conventionists were in control of Mexico City. Lastly I have assumed that the only Dead Letter Office operating in Mexico was in Mexico City, and nowhere else. Is this a valid assumption, or were there additional Dead Letter Offices in such major towns as Veracruz or Guadalajara?

HONDURAS: A THIRD REGISTERED COVER?

by J A van RIJN

Stanley Gibbons New York auction of March 17, 1981, featured, on page 70, a registered cover to France described as "one of two known covers" (illustrated below).



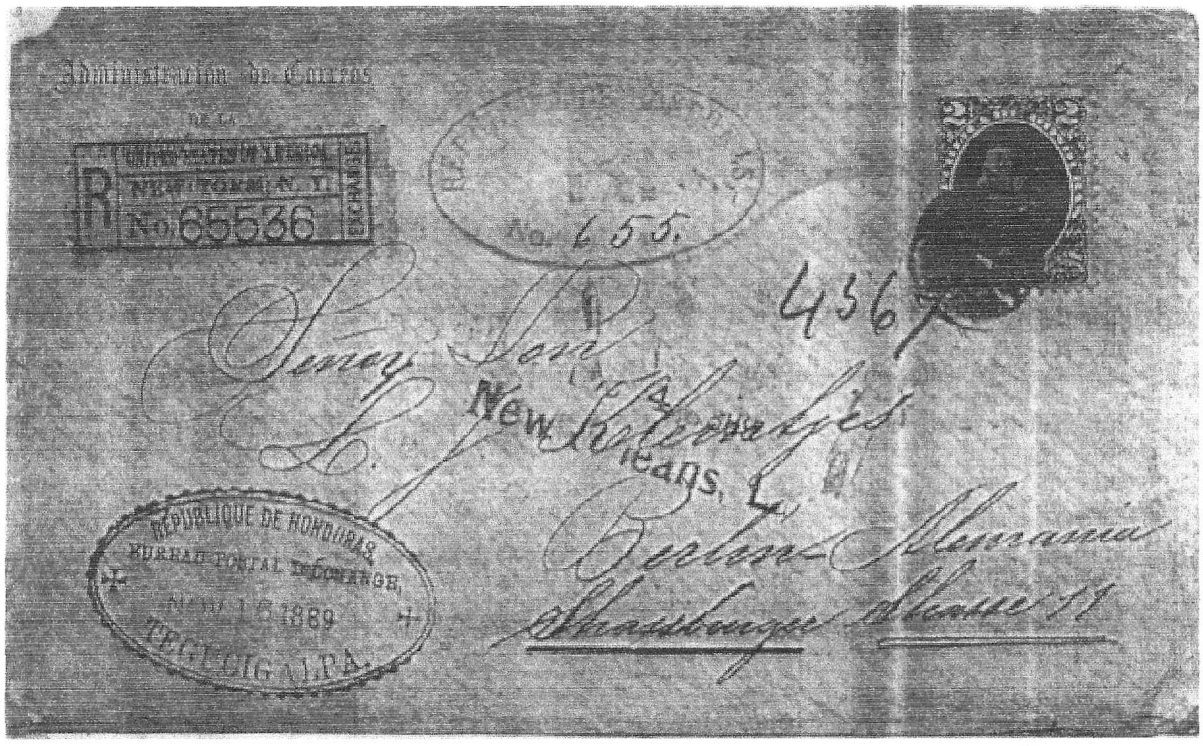
2r Deep Blue (34; SG35), a few trivial perf. flaws, tied by purple negative star in circle cancel, matching 1887 Tegucigalpa oval pmk. and "REPUBLICA DE HONDURAS R." oval registry handstamp on cover to France, partial Franch transit marking, fine and very rare, one of two known covers.

Est. $2,000-2,500

The photocopies on the next page are the front and back of a registered letter sent from Tegucigalpa to Berlin. Is this "the other" cover of the two referred to by Gibbons, or more likely a third, previously unrecorded, example?

The cover was part of a lot of Central American postal stationery items sold in a local auction consisting of fourteen items all addressed to the same Mr Kleinitjes in the period between 1889 and 1938. All originated in the United States and were sent to various towns in Germany, Holland and Switzerland. So there is no doubt as the authenticity of the cover.

I would be interested to hear if anyone has an opinion about the cover or knows of any other examples.

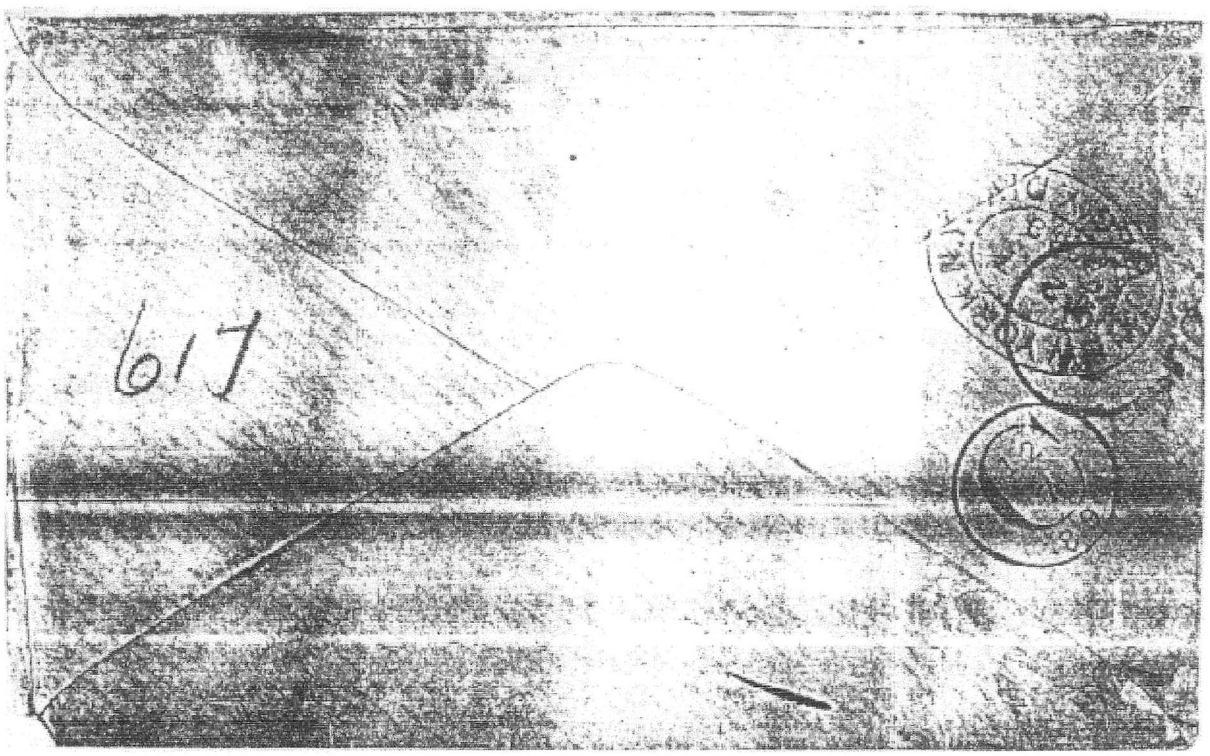


Front (above)

Registered letter, franked with Yv.18;SG35, from Tegucigalpa to Berlin, bearing a Tegucigalpa departure mark of 16 November 1889 and a Berlin arrival mark of 16 December 1889 a transit time of one month.

The reverse of the cover bears transit marks of New Orleans, 4 December 1889, and New York, 7 December 1889.

Reverse (below)



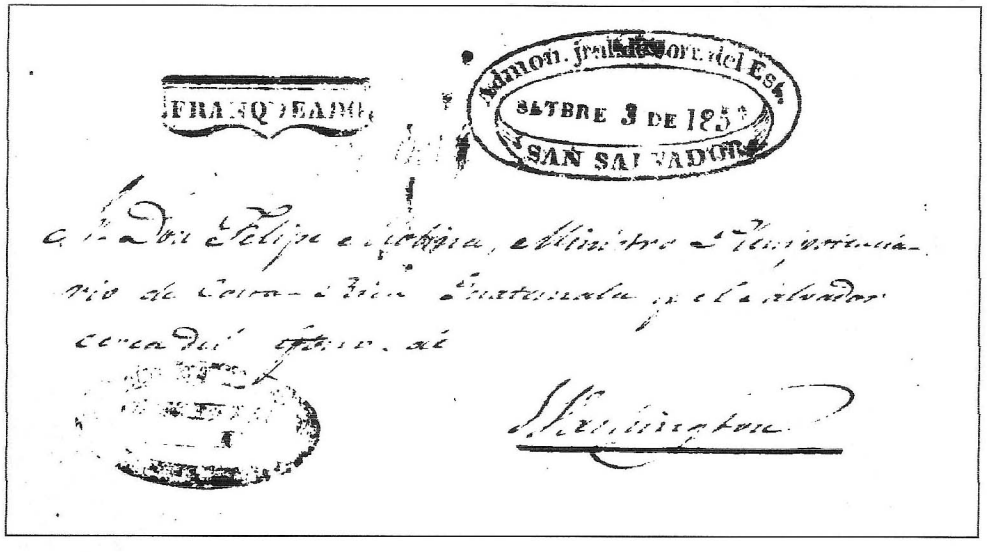
THE SAN JUAN ROUTE FOR MAIL FROM CENTRAL AMERICA 1827-56

by GIANA WAYMAN

Forwarding Agents. San Juan, in Nicaragua, existed for the trans-shipments between the interior and the Pacific coast of Central America. At its height there was a population of 2,000 and commercial houses owned by English, French, German, North American and possibly other nation's citizens. Several of these acted as forwarding agents.

Costa Rica made most use of this service since until the 1860's this was the most practical route to the Atlantic from the Central Valley. San José was six days by donkey to the Sarapiqui River at what is now Puerto Viajo and another 1-2 days down river to San Juan.

The first mention of the possible use of this route was in 1827. The first service was privately underwritten by a San José businessman in 1845 but failed after a few trips because of Customs charges in San Juan.

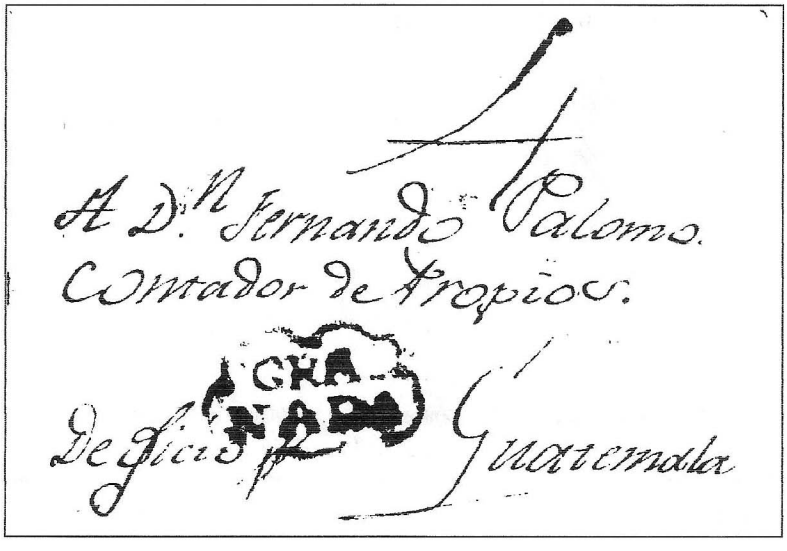


September 1853; a cover from El Salvador routed via San Juan. A regular overland service existed with Nicaragua and the pre-payment would carry it to that port. Forwarding agent S.Mayorga & Co. possibly sent it by the ship *Northern Light* arriving New York 24 September or *Star of the West* arriving 9 October. Transit marks were not used in Central America during this period. One of two reported examples of this agent and this route.

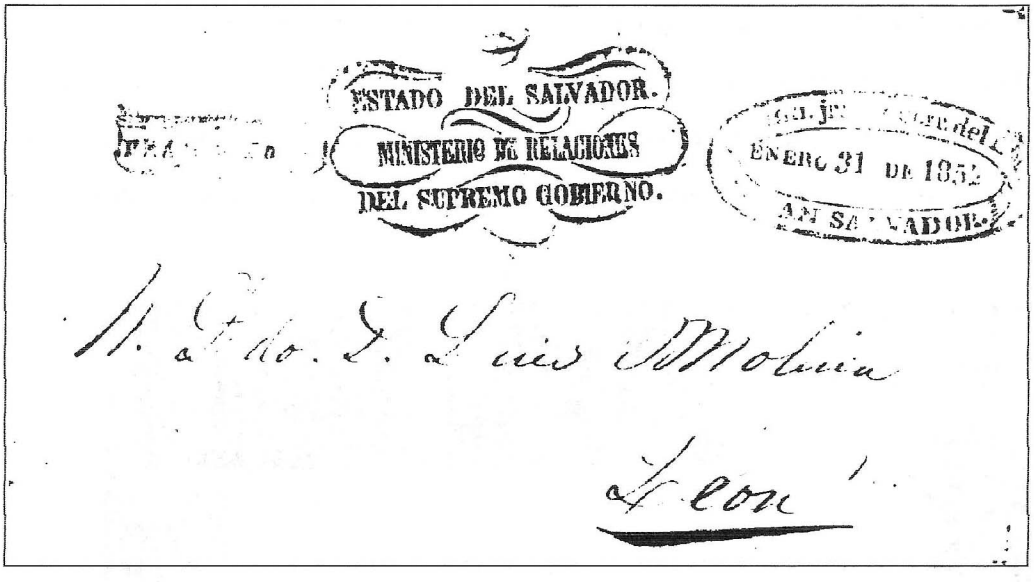
A Government service for mails to Europe and elsewhere via San Juan started in 1850 and by March 1856 was bi-monthly. That month mailbags were siezed by William Walker's troops and service was suspended until September 1857 continuing at least sporadically through most of the 1860's.It was the principal route for mail to the Atlantic side only from about 1850 to 1856, most

mail before and after going via Puntarenas and across Panama. The service during this period was very rapid and depndable from San Juan so it was used at least on occasion by El Salvador, as evidenced by the cover on the previous page.

Official Mail. From the first Spanish Colonial rates, through to the time of the Central American Federation until joining the UPU, varying number of officials had the free frank privilege. However this applied only to the Spanish Empire and after the Independence of Central America, mail outside these areas was subject to the same charges as other letters.



Official cover (*De Oficio* bottom left)' Independence period, charged 4 reales.



Letter wrapper from El Salvador with handstamp of the Minister of Foreign Relations indicating official mail. The *Franqueado* in red indicated not pre-paid. It was not assessed for postage on arrival in Nicaragua as such mail was delivered without charge.

This article first appeared in *El Faro* Vol 16, No.4 for November 1990 and is reproduced under the multilateral arrangement agreed between the various Latin American groups.

NICARAGUA: POSTAL RATES FROM 1913 - Part 5

by MICHAEL P BIRKS FRPSL

When I was seven I learned the Canadian National Anthem. It is "O, Canada". Forty years later I am studying postal rates *to* Canada and I want to rename it "Oh! Canada". For weeks nothing fitted and then I noticed that several covers had an odd ½c. The penny dropped. Canada is not part of America like my school teacher told me - well according to the Nicaraguan Post Office of the 1930's - it is an overseas destination. Add to that a 25c airmail fee (per 14g of course) - 60% dearer than Europe and Asia - and everything falls into place.

488? 5

C8? 20/25

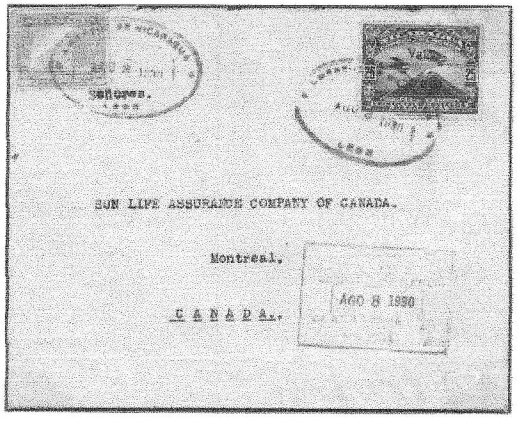
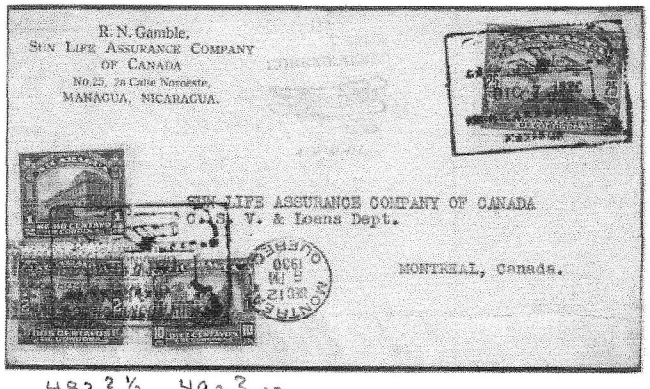


Figure 1

C8? 20/25



483? ½ 485? 2 490? 10

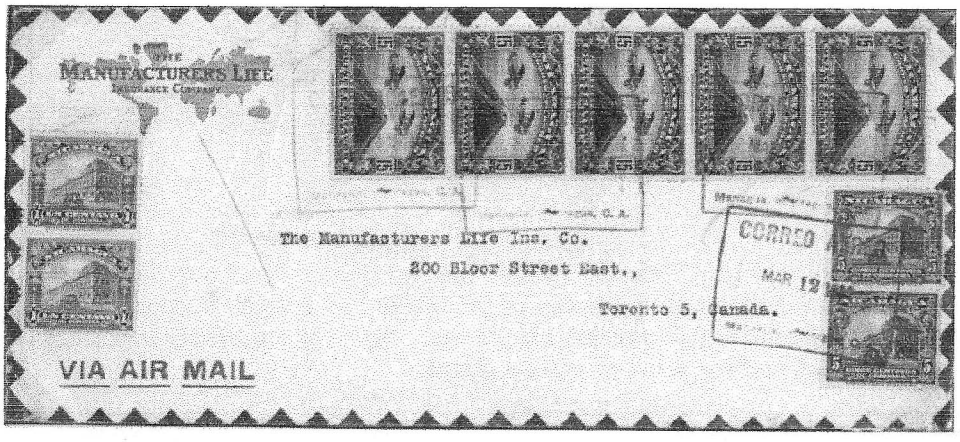
Figure 2

Figure 1 dates from the early days of FAM5 (3 August 1930) and so the airmail rate here is the standard 15c added to the overseas (not Pan-Am) postage rate of 10c, making 25c. However with the revision of rates the airmail fee to Canada became 25c and Figure 2 is an example. Not only that, it is the earliest example I have seen of the 7½c overseas rate (12 December 1930) and this gives an earlier date for the rate change. Add the 25c airmail fee and the total for this single cover is 32½c.

year? 1934?

C18 x5 15c

513? x2 1c

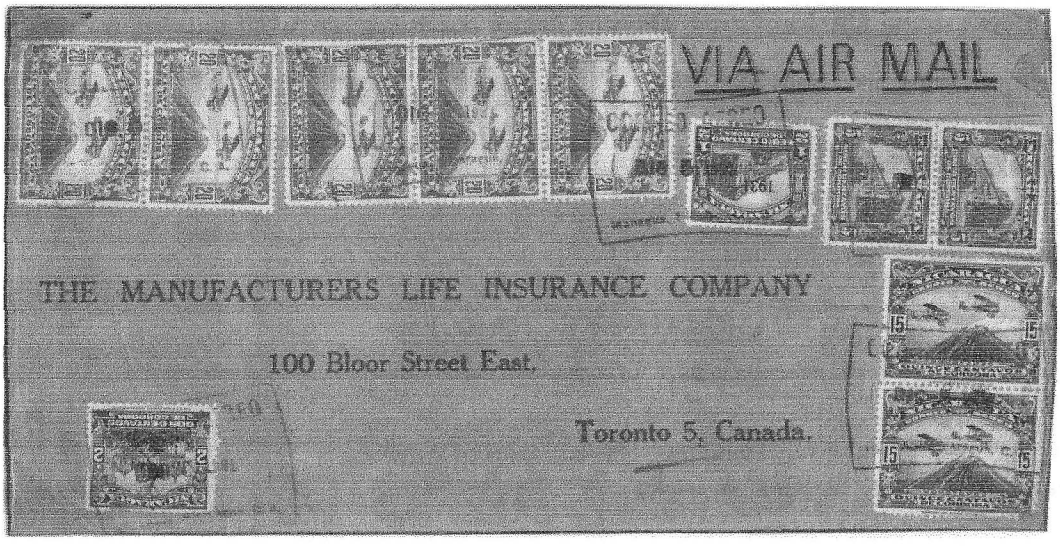


516? x2 5c

Figure 3

Figure 3 is franked 87c, made up of 7½+4½c postage plus 3x25c airmail. Weight 29-40g.

1931?

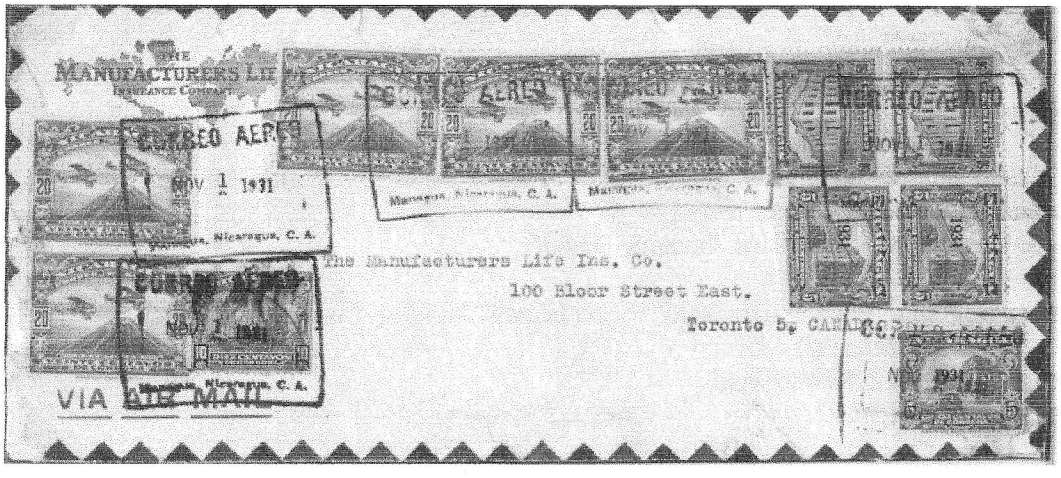


C 19 20 ×5
483? ½
516? 5 ×2
C 18 15 ×2
485? 2

Figure 4

Figure 4 is franked 141½c, made up of 7½+4½+4½c postage plus 5x25c airmail. Weight 57-60g. 1c overpaid.

1931 Nov 1



C 19 20 ×5
534 50 ×2
545? 5 ×3
518? 10

Figure 5

Figure 5 is franked 225c, made up of 7½+4x4½c postage plus 8x25c airmail. Weight 99-100g. ½c underpaid.

1931 Aug 30

C 18 15 ×5
415 1cor ×2
542 2 ×3
541 1
540 ½

Figure 6

Figure 5 is franked 282½c, made up of 7½+6x4½c postage plus 10x25c airmail. Weight 126-140g. 2c underpaid.

During a recent visit to the UPU in Berne, David Hankey our treasurer, went looking for records of the various airmail rates in South America. As a favour to me he also copied the entries for Nicaragua and as a result of his efforts, taking many hours, I am able to identify the various destinations and their airmail rates. For now I publish those which confirm and augment what I have written so far since I have not had time to fully study post-war rates.

AIRMAIL SURCHARGES

1932, 1933, 1934 & 1935	per 14g
Belize, Cuba, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, United States of America	15c
Bahamas, Canal Zone, Costa Rica, Panama, David	20c
Canada	25c
Dominican Republic, Haiti, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands, Jamaica, Curacao, Ecuador, Trinidad, Venezuela,	30c
Colombia	35c
Guyanas, Peru	40c
Bolivia, Chile, Brazil	50c
Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay	55c

1936, 1937, 1938 & 1939	per 14g
Belize, Cuba, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, United States of America, Mexico, Europe and Asia	15c
Bahamas, Canal Zone, Costa Rica, Panama, David	20c
Canada	25c
Dominican Republic, Haiti, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands, Jamaica, Colombia, Curacao, Ecuador, Trinidad, Venezuela,	30c
Guadeloupe & the Windward Islands	35c
Bolivia, Guyanas, Peru	40c
Chile,	50c
Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay	55c
Brazil	60c

(no 1940) 1941 & 1942	per 14g
Belize, Cuba, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, United States of America, Mexico, Cuba, Europe and Asia	15c
Bahamas, Canal Zone, Costa Rica, Panama,	20c
Canada	25c
Dominican Republic, Haiti, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands, Jamaica, Colombia, Curacao, Ecuador, Trinidad, Venezuela,	30c
Guadeloupe & the Windward Islands	35c
Bolivia, British Guiana, French Guiana, Surinam, Peru	40c
Chile,	50c
Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay	55c
Brazil	60c

I am not convinced (as I shall discuss in a future installment) that these latter rates were in fact put in force. I suggest that the intervention of war had a marked effect on postal rates.